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STATIONARINESS OF CRITICISM.

BY GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

"Zeal without knowledge is like expedition to a man in the dark."—*John Newton.*

Criticism in theology, as in literature, is with many an intoxication. Zest in showing what is wrong is apt to blunt the taste for what is right, which it is the true end of criticism to discover. Lord Byron said critics disliked Pope because he afforded them so few chances of objection. They found fault with him because he had no faults. The criticism of theology begets complacency in many. There is a natural satisfaction in being free from the superstition of the vulgar, in the Church as well as out of it. No wonder many find abiding pleasure in the intellectual refutation of the errors of supernaturalism and in putting its priests to confusion. Absorbed in the antagonism of theology, many lose sight of ultimate utility, and regard error, not as a misfortune to be alleviated, so much as a fault to be exposed. Like the theologian whose color they take—they do not much consider whether their method causes men to dislike the truth through its manner of being offered to them. Their ambition is to make those in error look foolish. Free thinkers of zeal are apt to become intense, and like Jules Ferry (a late French premier), care less for power, than for conflict, and the lover of conflict is not easily induced to regard the disproof of theology as a means to an end[1] higher than itself. It is difficult to impart to uncalculating zealots a sense of proportion. They dash along the warpath by their own momentum. Railway engineers find that it takes twice as much power to stop an express train as it does to start it.

When I first knew free thought societies they were engaged in Church-fighting—which is still popular among them, which has led the public to confuse criticism with Secularism, an entirely different thing.

Insurgent thought exclusively directed, breeds, as is said elsewhere, a distinguished class of men—among scholars as well as among the uninformed—who have a passion for disputation, which like other passions "grows by what it feeds upon." Yet a limited number of such paladins of investigation are not without uses in the economy of civilisations. They resemble the mighty hunters of old, they extirpate beasts of prey which roam the theological forests, and thus they render life more safe to dwellers in cities, open to the voracious incursions of supernaturalism.

Without the class of combatants described, in whom discussion is irrepressible, and whose courage neither odium nor danger abates—many castles of superstition would never be stormed. But mere intellectualism generates a different and less useful species of thinkers, who neither hunt in the jungles of theology nor storm strongholds. We all know hundreds in every great town who have freed themselves, or have been freed by others, from ecclesiastical error, who remain supine. Content with their own superiority (which they owe to the pioneers who went before them more generous than they) they speak no word, and lend no aid towards conferring the same advantages upon such as are still enslaved. They affect to despise the ignorance they ought to be foremost to dissipate. They exclaim in the words of Goethe's Coptic song:

"Fools from their folly 'tis hopeless to stay,
Mules will be mules by the laws of their mulishness,
Then be advised and leave fools to their foolishness,
What from an ass can be got but a bray."

These Coptic philosophers overlook that they would have been "asses" also, had those who vindicated freedom before their day, and raised it to a power, been as indifferent and as contemptuous as believers in the fool-theory are. Coptic thinkers forget that every man is a fool in respect of any question on which he gives an opinion without having thought independently upon it. With patience you can make a thinker out of a fool; and the first step from the fool stage is accomplished by a little thinking. It is well to remember the exclamation of Thackeray: "If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man."

It is, however, but justice to some who join the stationariness, to own that they have fared badly on the warpath against error, and are entitled to the sympathy we extend to the battered soldier who falls out of the ranks on the march. Grote indicates what the severity of the service is, in the following passage from his "Mischiefs of Natural Religion":—"Of all

[1] Buckle truly says, "Liberty is not a means, it is an end in itself." But the uses of liberty are means to ends. Else why do we want liberty?

human antipathies that which the believer in a God bears to the unbeliever, is the fullest, the most unqualified, and the most universal. The mere circumstance of dissent envolves a tacit imputation of error and incapacity on the part of the priest, who discerns that his persuasive power is not rated so highly by others as it is by himself. This invariably begets dislike towards his antagonist."

Nevertheless it is a reproach to those whom militant thought has made free, if they remain unmindful of the fate of their inferiors. Yet Christian churches, with all self-complacent superiority to which many of them are prone, are not free from the sins of indifference and superfineness. This was conspicuously shown by Southey in a letter to Sir Henry Taylor, in which he says:—"Have you seen the strange book which Anastasius Hope left for publication and which his representatives, in spite of all dissuasion, have published? His notion of immortality and heaven is that at the consummation of all things he, and you, and I, and John Murray, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Lambert the fat man, and the Living Skeleton, and Queen Elizabeth, and the Hottentot, Venus, and Thutell, and Probert, and the Twelve Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and Genghis Khan and all his armies, and Noah with all his ancestors and all his posterity,—yea, all men, and all women, and all children that have ever been, or ever shall be, saints and sinners alike, are all to be put together and made into one great celestial, eternal human being . . . I do not like the scheme. I don't like the notion of being mixed up with Hume, and Hunt, and Whittle Harvey, and Philpotts, and Lord Althorp, and the Huns, and the Hottentots, and the Jews, and the Philistines, and the Scotch, and the Irish. God forbid! I hope to be I, myself, in an English heaven, with you yourself,—you and some others without whom heaven would be no heaven to me."

Most of these persons would have the same dislike to be mixed up with Mr. Southey. Lord Byron would not have been enthusiastic about it. The Comtists have done something to preach a doctrine of humanity, and to put an end to this pitiful contempt of a few men for their fellows,—fellows who in many respects are often superior to those who despise them.

All superiority is apt to be contemptuous of inferiors, unless conscience and generosity takes care of it, and incites it to instruct inferior natures. The prayer of Browning is one of noble discernment:—

> "Make no more giants, God—
> But elevate the race at once."

Even free thought, so far as it confines itself to itself, becomes stationary. Like the squirrel in its cage:

> "Whether it turns by wood or wire,
> Never gets one hair's breadth higher."

If any doubt whether stationariness of thought is possible, let them think of Protestantism which climbed on to the ledge of private judgment three centuries ago—and has remained there. Instead of mounting higher and overrunning all the plateaus of error above them, it has done its best to prevent any who would do it, from ascending. There is now, however, a new order of insurgent thought of the excelsior caste which seeks to climb the heights. Distinguished writers against theology in the past have regarded destructive criticism as preparing the way to higher conceptions of life and duty. If so little has been done in this direction among working class thinkers, it is because destructiveness is more easy. It needs only indignation to perfect it, and indignation requires no effort. The faculty of constructiveness is more arduous in exercise, and is later in germination. More men are able to take a state than to make a state. Hence Secularism, though inevitable as the next stage of militant progress, more slowly wins adherents and appreciation.

REVERSIONARY IMMORTALITY.

BY GEORGE M. MCCRIE.

> "There is no Death in the concrete: that which passes away, passes away into its own self; only the passing away passes away."—*Hegel.*

MAINLY in correspondence with our view of human personality will be found our estimate of immortality—of what immortality, for mankind, really is, and means. Traditional religionism, in this connexion, was content with nothing less than the veritable resurrection of the flesh, in the case of the human organism—looked forward to the day and hour when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; when the sea shall give up its dead, and the dust and ashes of the grave reassemble in living form once more. "I believe in the resurrection of the body—literally, of the flesh—and the life everlasting," are clauses in the most ancient symbol of the Christian faith.

Gradually this belief weakened, mainly on account of its inherent contradictions. Common sense, in course of time, asserted the view, that the self-same corporeal particles in their turn play many parts, pass from one organism to another, in the ordinary course and flux of the material, and that atom and molecule, from the dawn of life on this planet, had helped to build up unnumbered individuals. Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, might not only stop a hole to keep the wind away, but might in turn go to form, *inter alia multa* part of the organism of the veriest clown. Clearly, then, since no man can claim exclusive rights in his corporeal elements, he could not reasonably expect to have the sole title to them at the resurrection. Latter-day Christianity, thus worsted,

generally retreats upon Paul's dictum that, though it is a "natural body" which is sown in the tomb, it is a "spiritual body" which is to be raised at the last day. And, though no one knows exactly what a "spiritual body" is, or rather as the phrase may mean anything or nothing, the explanation passes muster in orthodox circles to this day.

The conception of modern scientific religion is of a different character altogether, as was to be expected from its views upon the subject of personality. In this view, to quote George Eliot, "we live again in lives made better [and, it might be added, worse] by our presence," but not otherwise. Our *karma*—the dynamic of our egoity—passes on to future generations. Thus, and thus only, do we survive. As we are, in some sort, the heirs of all behind us in the past, so, in the same way, we are the progenitors of all before us in the future. As Hudor Genone puts it in his recent article,[1] there is, in this view, a threefold immortality, respectively, of matter, of force, and of volition.

Such are some of the replies which have been made to the old question—If a man die, shall he live again?

Personally, I believe that none of these views contain the whole truth, but that each envisages the truth fractionally. And this, although I am well aware that my own view of the subject is colored with an aspect of personality which is not in accord either with Christian traditionalism, or with the enlightened views of the editor of this journal.

I may perhaps be allowed to argue, however, that human immortality, viewed broadly, is a persistence of life, somehow, beyond the grave and gate of death —in other words, an everlasting life. Christianity affirms this of the soul, clothed upon with a spiritual body at the resurrection. Modern scientific religion denies it in the case of the *I* of personal consciousness, but affirms it in the case of what it calls the true *I*—the individual *karma*.

Now it may be asked, Why should this *I* of the personal consciousness—physical or psychical—die at all? However illusory this idea of the *I* may seem upon close analysis, it is *there*; as an idea it is insistent, unmistakable; why should it end, seeing that nothing else that we know of ends, but that everything, on the contrary, persists and perdures? We are told, however, that *this*—both as idea and as reality—passes away, when nothing else passes away—that it alone is something which is destined to die without hope of resurrection, leaving only the shadow of its effect behind. Curious, if true. But is it true?

Strangely inchoate are popular ideas of infinity and eternity! For the most part the former is modelled on the lines of mathematical infinity, with which infinity, in the sense of everlastingness, has little or nothing in common. Yet some persons talk almost glibly of infinity. As Felix Holt says: "Your dunce, who cannot do his sums, always has a taste for the infinite." Mathematically, the infinite mainly suggests endless prolongation, as of a line, or series, infinitely continued. Eternity, again, poses, with most, as a line stretching infinitely in the directions of past and future. Space is at the foundation of these concepts; they do not pertain primarily to time. Yet even in the spatial domain, the old idea of eternity was better. Its emblem was a circle,—something without beginning or ending,—a curve ever returning into itself. For, after all, the true note of infinity and eternity is not indefinite prolongation away from a given point in any direction, but recurrence, reiteration, repetition!

Nowadays it seems as if we may have to amend our concepts of space, and to familiarise ourselves with the possibility of space being boundless, but not infinitely great—to accustom ourselves to the idea of a projectile fired into space possibly returning, after millions of years it may be, from precisely the opposite direction, to the point of departure. Here essentially is the idea of *recurrence* once more. The course of the material universe, as we believe it, is an orbit, elliptical or circular. What if immortality has its orbit also?

Doubtless, such an idea is one difficult to seize, so accustomed are we to associate what George Herbert terms "everlastingness" with the production of something onwards and outwards, from now and here, on spatial or timal lines. The very clearest modern thinkers encourage the idea that a particular stage or point once past, say in the life-history of the human organism, it is forever over and done with,—never will, or can, occur again. The innate composition of this organism is, they admit, not a stable or constant quantity. On the contrary, it is continually interchanging particles with its environment; but there comes a time, they say, when this fluent vortex of association, which we call personality, disrupts and dissolves—forever, and the bodily constituents go elsewhere, to form wholly new combinations, and to enter into new partnerships. The silver cord of the individual life, however, is forever loosed; and the golden bowl irrevocably broken. And this view may be held without the smallest tincture of animism, without a particle of belief in the existence of an indwelling spirit, "returning unto God who gave it." It is simply and solely a physical conception. My objection to it is, that it does not go far enough, or look far enough ahead.

In the scientific conception of the conservation—or rather perduration—of matter, matter is looked upon as a fixed and definite quantity, neither to be

[1] "Scientific Immortality," *The Open Court*, No. 393, March 7, 1895.

increased nor diminished, undergoing, indeed, continual metamorphosis and vicissitude, but nevertheless in amount unalterable. So in the case of the conservation of energy. The sum is constant. Nothing is thus lost, but everything persists and perdures. If so, we have only to set this persistence and perduration within the solvent of time, which is necessarily infinite, to obtain a necessary recurrence, or repetition, of the self-same combinations.[1] Time was, or is, when such a combination of material particles constitutes, or constituted, the living being we call a human personality. It is not something like Pyrrhonism to doubt that what has been, or is now, may be—nay, *must* be again, by virtue of a law as unalterable as that by which the planet swings; that, in an infinite series of atomic and molecular collocations, the self-same grouping and arrangements must happen again and again, everlastingly; and that nothing, in this sense, passes away, except, as Hegel puts it, the "passing away" itself, but that everything endlessly recurs? The true alembic of infinity lies in the word repetition—re-birth, if you will. Recurrence of existence—

"At last, far off, at last, to all"—

is the true note of everlasting life!

In this sense, though a man die, he must, and shall, live again the self-same personal life. In a weirdly-significant sense of familiar words, *he must be born again!* At his decease everything remains potentially unaltered, fit and able to reproduce him once more, though his dust be spread to the four winds, or whelmed in the deepest sea. Nothing that constitutes his being dies, though everything belonging to him suffers a sea-change. After unnumbered ages, innumerable transformations, changes and chances countless, once more the self-same combination occurs; once more, life's magic pinions and its wizard wheels resume the self-same round. The self-same life of the self-same personality is taken up once more. In the die-cast of infinity, all things are, not only possible, but *inevitable*. Not wholly vain, then, the affirmation "I believe in the resurrection of the body"—not wholly illusory, the tombstone-legend *Resurgam*!

Admittedly a speculation—one which most persons will consider a vainly fantastic one—I would only point out that it is one which, to some extent, fits in with modern scientific concepts. It is one which has also some notable corollaries. Consciousness, personal consciousness, can, in this view, be seen to appertain, not to the several ultimate constituents which go to build up the human organism, but only to their joint compound in organised form. And this, whatever value or import we assign to the bond of personality itself, ever constant amid the material flux. Consciousness again,—my own proper consciousness,—itself inalienable and untransferable, though thus subject to recurrent intervals of practical oblivion—it may be for unnumbered æons—would be, according to this view, practically continuous as regards itself. Such an idea, of course, runs counter to all our prepossessions, but who would assert that consciousness, thus interrupted and broken in upon solely by *un*consciousness, would be, for all intents and purposes, other than continuous?

Further, however, we cannot go. Speculation itself drops its wing when urged to bolder flight. Whether memory would, or would not, play a part in such stupendous timal combinations of the material as those above alluded to, we cannot say. Whether such operations would be governed by the law of probability, by quasi-chance, or indeed by chance absolute, cannot be determined. Whether the theatre of such transformations would be the universe in its totality, or a more restricted sphere, is equally a matter of speculation, while, as to the precise mode of our rebirth, of our re-entrance into our reversionary inheritance of immortality, who can speak?

Yet all this does not weaken our persuasion; it rather tends to strengthen it, feeling, as we do and must, that the problem of everlastingness must always be a matter mainly of speculation. The belief in the persistence of our karma rests also on a speculative basis. The view above stated, however, sheds an additional gleam of significance upon man's unappeasable longing after immortality,—"the thoughts which," as Wordsworth says, "wake now to perish never,"—and which nothing "can abolish or destroy."

Death, "the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors," is but a phantom after all—the shadow of a shade! The grave is our bed, not our eternal home, for mortality is indeed swallowed up of life.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

RESURGAM.

The greatest difficulty in the right comprehension of reality, it appears, lies in the recognition of the all-importance of form. Our very language is in many respects misleading, as most of its similes symbolise the formal in material allegories. For instance when we speak of the "substance" of a thing we do not mean the material of which it consists but the essential and most important feature of its being. Thus the

[1] Dr. Carus, in a former controversy with Mr. C. S. Peirce, remarks as follows:

"The theory of probabilities teaches, that whatever can happen in th long course of an infinite number of events, actually will happen, and that whatever, according to the nature of things, has a greater probability, will in an infinite number of cases occur with proportionately greater frequency."

He adds: "The lesson which we have to draw from this statement is, that that which we wish not to happen, should be made impossible."—*The Monist*, Vol. III., No. 4, p. 598.

words "spirit," "animus" and "anima," "psyche," "atman," and others of the same kind mean breath or air, as though the soul consisted of a gaseous substance, of ether, or of any matter at all; and he who denies the substantiality of the soul is even to-day frequently regarded as denying the existence of the soul itself.

Soul is not a mysterious substance, but the form of living organisms. The identity of the soul in the flux of matter depends upon the preservation of its peculiar and idiosyncratic form. Personality is in brief a *résumé* of all the antecedents, prenatal and otherwise, of a man's life-history. A living organism is nothing more nor less than a summation of innumerable memories, and memory is simply immortalised soul-activity.

The action of every cell is conditioned partly by the stimuli of its surroundings, partly by its structure; and the structure is the residuum which the past history of the cell has precipitated upon sentiency. Every animated creature and every speck of living substance is an embodiment of its former experiences from its first beginnings. Every moment of time is fleeting, but every deed done, every action performed, every kind of contact with the outer world experienced will persist; they remain as traces constituting peculiar dispositions that upon proper stimulation can be revived.

What am I? I consist of a great number of activities, physiological, mental, and emotional. A great part of these activities—especially the physiological functions of the various nutritive, sensory, and motor organs are hereditary, that is to say, they have originated in the baby in the same way that the memories of a tree lie dormant in a bud, or as the acorn possesses the tendency of repeating the growth-process of the oaks of which it is a descendant. Another part of the activities has been impressed into this sentient system of hereditary activities by the example and words of other people and by the experiences made during lifetime. I *am* the organised totality of these peculiar forms of life; functions of the stomach, the sensory organs, the brain, and the muscles. I do not have them, I *am* all these. I do not possess my ideas, I *am* my ideas. I do not own aspirations, I consist of them, I *am* my aspirations. The ideals which I cherish are my actual self.

As there is no cause without effect, so there is no soul-activity but leaves its trace, not only in its own organism, but also in its surroundings. And as the electric current in the telephone wire can reproduce the living voice of the speaker, as songs and speeches are preserved in the tin-foil and wax-cylinders of the phonograph, so our spoken, written, and printed words, our works of art, our good and evil deeds, indeed all the various acts of life are like seals of our soul set upon the surrounding world, producing in its intricate relations such definite dispositions as are capable of reproducing again and again our very souls. Our life is more than a manifestation of ourselves; it is our own immortalisation. Every form of life is the continuance of the past. The past persists in the present form of life; and in the same way the present will persist in the future.

Mr. McCrie belongs to those authors who are not fettered by dogmatic influences of church or school, yet he still preserves a part of the materialistic prejudice that we consist of a number of material particles. Should the same particles be reunited, then we shall live again, and this is held out as a distant hope of reversionary immortality, based upon the doctrine that the chance-combinations in a system of a definite number of particles will at last be exhausted, and must, if the process continues, be repeated. Mr. McCrie's proposition, which (if we mistake not, was first suggested by Mr. Mill) suffers from the serious drawback that we do not know whether or not the universe consists of discrete units, be they atoms or vortices. On the other hand, our confidence in both the persistence of our soul and the resurrection of similar soul-forms is much better grounded than upon the hope of a reunion of the same particles of matter; it consists in the preservation of form and the re-creation of the same forms that now constitute our being. So long as the intrinsic constitution of the universe remains the same—and it will remain the same if the necessity that lies at the bottom of all the laws of the cosmic order be at all immutable and eternal—: the world will produce the same kind of rational beings, whose hearts will be aglow with the same hopes and fears, loves and aversions, yearning for the same happiness, recognising like duties, restraining themselves by the same moral code, and finding comfort for their various afflictions and the transiency of their work in the same immortality based upon the recognition of the eternal identity of the immutable prototype of the soul-constitution.

A man is apt to be despondent when for the first time in his life he comprehends the full significance of the truth that the strength of our days is labor and sorrow; but he will find comfort in the thought that his labor was not spent in vain and his life was worth living. Thus he naturally seeks for something that possesses a lasting value, and this desire is formulated in the idea of immortality; yet it appears that there can be no great solace in the assurance of a mere preservation of our soul-forms, while the expectation of their continued usefulness is the greatest and noblest satisfaction we can have.

The joy of Heaven and the bliss of Nirvana does

not consist in pure existence, in passivity, but in achievement, in the activity of profitable work. It is not the being, but the doing.

The value of the continuation of man's life-work and of his soul is not so much mere immortality but constant progress and evolution, it is further expansion and soul-epigenesis, an additional growth and an increase of application.

The spiritual capital acquired is put to use, the form moulded to suit certain needs continues to serve as a model for further improvement; and an important experience or a valuable invention becomes the conditions of the unlimited advance of a higher civilisation.

Consider only the man who first bored holes into pieces of rolling tree-trunks and thus became the inventor of the wheel. Consider the inventor of the needle, or the man who deepened the hollow tree and changed it into a boat. Their names are unknown, but the intelligence of these men still lives. There is no machinery but that peculiar thought-form which originated in the first wheelwright's mind, is present in it. No coat, no shoe is worn by us, but we ought to be grateful to the inventor of the needle. No ocean steamer is built but its builders are indebted to him who made the first skiff.

It is not only the work of inventors that lives on, their soul-forms, too, are preserved in the minds of those who inherit the blessings of their labors. They are all here within us.

The pristine genius of the forefathers of our race still vibrates through the brains of inventors to-day and constitutes there the elementary notions of mechanics; there it acquires consciousness, and continues the struggle for conquering more and more of the forces of nature.

Were not the life-work of the generations of the past their intellectual and moral qualities, the strength of the father and the tender love of the mother, constantly resurrected and reincarnated in our children, there would be no progress, no evolution, no advance to higher stages.

Life may not be worth living to him who has the notion that he is an agglomeration of atoms and that his soul will be gone as soon as the material complex of which he at a given time consists be dissolved; but life is worth living to him who comprehends his connexion with the past and knows whence his soul cometh; for he will thereby learn whither it fareth. He will understand that in his future existence he will reap what he now sows; he will act not from interests that are limited to the moments of his individual existence; it is the prospect of the enlarged sphere of influence in the life to come that will dominate his motives and guide his actions P. C.

THOMAS TAYLOR, THE PLATONIST.

BY AMOS WATERS.

> "When a hero of thought dies, his ideals remain with us. The body dies, but the soul lives."—*Paul Carus.*[1]

Ralph Waldo Emerson, speaking with Wordsworth in 1848, talked of English national character. "I told him," writes Emerson, "it was not creditable that no one in all the country knew anything of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, whilst in every American library his translations are found. I said, if Plato's *Republic* were published in England as a new book to-day, do you think it would find any readers? He confessed it would not; 'and yet,' he added, after a pause, with that complacency which never deserts a true-born Englishmen, 'and yet we have embodied it all.'"[2]

Elsewhere, Emerson ranges Thomas Taylor among the great men "nature is incessantly sending up out of night to be *his men*" —Plato's men a "constellation of genius."[3]

"To strain human curiosity to the utmost limits of human "credibility," wrote Isaac Disraeli, "a modern Plato has arisen "in Mr. Thomas Taylor, who consonant to the Platonic philos- "ophy, religiously professes Polytheism! At the close of the eigh- "teenth century, be it noted, were published many volumes in "which the author affects to avow himself a zealous Platonist, and "asserts that he can prove that the Christian religion is a 'bastard- "ised and barbarous Platouism.' The divinities of Plato are the "deities to be adored, and we are to be taught to call God, Jupi- "ter; the Virgin, Venus; and Christ, Cupid! The Iliad of Homer "allegorised, is converted into a Greek Bible of the Arcana of "Nature!"[4] In *Vaurien*—a novel now forgotten—which appeared in 1797, the same Disraeli lampooned Taylor more or less objectionably. Posterity is often just in neglect or approbation—*Vaurien* is a bookworm's faint memory; Thomas Taylor, who being dead yet speaketh, is just now demanding a meed of cultured interest, a century after the publication of the caricature. And apart from the accession of public interest in Taylor, created by the reproduction of some of his more important translations, the life of this rare and devoted scholar merits a tribute of memorial. Taylor wrote in the sheer love of learning, and for no other end than the passionate loyalty of the true scholar's soul, to faithfully interpret the message of his ancient redeemer to a forgetful generation. He had no axes to grind, no logs to roll; he wrote for philosophical, and not personal, interest, as a prophet serenely indifferent to profit even when hunger gnawed his vitals.

Thomas Taylor was born in London in 1758. His birth was humble, his inheritance weakness and disease. Symptoms of consumption were alarming at the age of six. Three years later he was sent to St. Paul's School to be educated for the Nonconformist ministry. Here his love of contemplation—his aversion to merely verbal disquisitions—was marked. One of his masters, Mr. William Ryder, whenever a sentence remarkably moral or grave chanced in any classic young Taylor was translating, would observe: "Come, here is something worthy the attention of a philosopher!" He was altogether precocious—discovered blunders in a Latin Testament, discovered that his talents were not for the ministry, discovered that he was in love (with his future wife) within the first twelve years of his singular life.

At the age of fifteen he was uncongenially employed by an exacting uncle-in-law, in the offices of Sheerness Dockyards. Thirsting for knowledge, resenting his slavery, he again complied with his father's hopes by consenting to be the pupil of a dissenting minister. "He studied Greek and Latin during the day, courted

1 *Truth in Fiction.*
2 *English Traits*, p. 166. 1856.
3 *Representative Men*, p. 18. 1850.
4 *Curiosities of Literature*, "Modern Platonism."

Miss Merton in the evening, and at night read Simson's *Conic Sections* in the Latin edition." Before leaving for Aberdeen University the young sweethearts decided to secretly marry and defer marital life till his education should be finished. This was discovered by the bride's mother, and, says one, the couple "had a bad time of it." The lady was intended for a brainless man of money—not a moneyless man of brains. Her father dying, left all help in the discretion of an illiberal relative. For eighteen months the couple lived on a shilling per diem. Taylor then obtained a situation as usher, and spent Saturday afternoons with his wife. Next a berth in Lubbock's Bank at £50 per year—paid quarterly—a story of struggle. Often Taylor fainted from want of food on reaching his home. Even then study was not neglected—far into the night he engaged himself with Becker's *Physica Subterranea*, and quadrature of the circle. Believing that he had found a method of geometrical, though not arithmetical, rectification, he managed to obtain publication—without much publicity—for a quarto pamphlet on *A New Method of Reasoning in Geometry*. Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Proclus accompanied him as he delivered bank-bills! Proclus especially was connected with a memorable association. Mary Woollstoncraft and Miss Blood resided with the Taylors for three months. The former listened to his commentaries on Plato and named his study the "Abode of Peace."

Six years of drudgery at the bank was too much for our philosopher. After attempting a "perpetual lamp"—phosphorus immersed in oil and salt boiled—and exhibiting his invention at the Freemason's Tavern, (when the phosphorus fired and created prejudice,) he was influentially assisted to leave the bank and live on literary "toil." Flaxman, the sculptor, encouraged his devotion to Plato and introduced him to eminent ones, among them the erratic *Marquis de Valady*. The Marquis was one of the remarkable characters in the French Revolution; he acted with the Girondins and was condemned to death in 1794.

After the Marquis left him, Taylor received a legacy of some six or seven hundred pounds. The student immediately spent the bulk in relieving his poor relations and betrayed no worldly wisdom in disposing of the rest. Five or six years after he was as needy as ever, and, to keep the wolf from the door, made seven months miraculous with translations of Plato's *Dialogues*, illustrated with notes and elaborate introductions. The copy was bargained away for the sum of fifty pounds! Another labor was his translation of Pausanias—ten months' devotion rewarded by sixty pounds! Samuel Patterson observed to a bookseller that the task itself was "enough to break a man's heart." "Oh," said the bookseller, "nothing will break the heart of Mr. Taylor!" But the strain of this enterprise claimed a heavy price from the scholar. His frame was ravaged by extreme debility, and he lost the use of his forefinger. Yet the light of his soul burned, star-like, the brighter because of the blackness of night. In difficulty of hand and lassitude of body he completed Plato for English readers in two years, and further engaged in translating Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* as well as the *Metaphysics*. These were published at the expense of the Duke of Norfolk. Some sixty-seven volumes represent the monumental lifework of this single-hearted scholar, and only one was actually paid for by the booksellers or the public. The victim died at Walworth, November 1, 1835, through disease of the bladder. A few days before his death he asked if a comet had appeared—answered "Yes," he said: "Then I shall die; I was born with it, and shall die with it." Pure of heart even as a little child, single in purpose, impervious to menace, his enthusiasm for Greek thought, and his mighty achievements in interpreting neglected aspects of philosophy without hope of sordid reward must surely arrest a tribute of admiration from all lovers of learning and literature. He had rectitude and splendid sincerity. He lacked balance—there was no *lumber* in his hold, to use a phrase of the sea. His only vices were generosity, application, and self-neglect. In the turmoil of London—in the nineteenth century of Christ-worship—the Neo-Platonist courted poverty and risked imprisonment, sacrificed health and his very life at the shrine of ancient and almost derided tombs, and finally rests in an undiscoverable grave no pilgrim may consecrate with worthy wreath of remembrance.

Three of Taylor's important translations have just been republished.[1] Mr. Bertram Dobell is one of the fine spirits of cultured liberalism who redeems publishing from mere commerce, and cares for what is great and enduring in literature far above its price in the market. *Iamblichus* is an almost exact facsimile of the first edition of 1821, and is intended as the first of a revival series of the now scarce and costly originals. This book has no appeal to the Philistines of "progress." Only earnest students of ancient philosophy, who admit a deep spiritual debt to the profound speculations of the ages we have inherited, will worthily cherish this message from a vanished world. The message is saturated with the wisdom of the Chaldeans, the lore of Egyptian prophets, with Assyrian dogma and the doctrines of the Hermaic pillars. Taylor indeed highly appraises the work as "the most copious, clearest, and the most satisfactory defence extant of genuine ancient theology"—scientific as sublime. He holds that the operations of this theology had previously been surveyed only in the corruptions of barbarian nations, or during the decline and fall of the Roman Empire when overwhelmed with pollution. Epitomising his elsewhere more elaborate discussions, Taylor holds this theology to celebrate the immense principle of things as something superior to being itself—as exempt from the whole of things of which it is the ineffable source. This principle is *the one* and *the good*—the former indicating its transcendent simplicity, the latter its subsistence as the object of desire to all beings. "At the same time, however, it asserts that these appellations are in reality nothing more than the parturitions of the soul, which, standing as it were in the vestibules of the adytum of deity, announce nothing pertaining to the ineffable, but only indicate her spontaneous tendencies towards it, and belong rather to the immediate offspring of the first God than to the first itself" (p. 10). This dogma is based on scientific reasoning. The principle of all things is *the one*. This implies the necessity of continual progression of beings without intervening vacuum in corporeal or incorporeal natures—natural progression to proceed through similitude. Each producing principle should generate a number of the same order with itself—*nature* a natural number, *soul* a psychical number, and *intellect* an intellectual number. Since there is one unity the principle of the universe, this unity should produce from itself prior to everything else a "multitude of natures characterised by unity, and a number the most of all things allied to its cause; and these natures are no other than the gods" (p. 12).

Emerson speaking of this "terrific unity" proceeds on kindred lines:

"The mind is urged to ask for one cause of many effects; "then for the cause of that; and again the cause, diving still into "the profound: self-assured that it shall arrive at an absolute "and sufficient one—a one that shall be all. 'In the midst of the "sun is the light, in the midst of the light is truth, and in the "midst of truth is the imperishable being' say the Vedas. All "philosophy, of East and West, has the same centripetence. "Urged by an apposite necessity, the mind returns from the one, "to that which is not one, but other or many; from cause to ef-"fect; and affirms the necessary existence of variety, the self-ex-

[1] *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, pages, xxvi-365. 7s 6d. (*The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, pages, vi-205, 5s 6d. has been published since this article was in type.) Bertram Dobell, 77 Charing Cross Road, London, *The Republic of Plato*, pages, 309. 1s 6d. Walter Scott, Paternoster Square.

"istence of both, as each is involved in the other. These strictly-"blended elements it is the problem of thought to separate, and "to reconcile. Their existence is mutually contradictory and ex-"clusive; and each so fast slides into the other, that we can never "say what is one, and what it is not. The Proteus is as nimble "in the highest as in the lowest grounds, when we contemplate the one, the true, the good—as in the surfaces and extremities "of matter."[1]

From these dazzling summits—returning to Taylor—"these ineffable blossoms, these divine propagations, *being*, *life*, *intellect*, *soul*, *nature*, *and body* depend; monads suspended from *unities*, deified natures proceeding from deities" (p. 12). All the great monads are comprehended in the first one from which they and all their depending series are unfolded into light. With singular passion and ardent sincerity, Taylor pauses to declaim that ignorance and impious fraud have conspired to defame the inestimable works of Proclus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Syrianus, Ammonius, Damascius, Olympioderus, and Simplicius,—denounces the "insane fury of ecclesiastical zeal" that heaps ridicule and contempt on the "grand dogmas" of the ancients. One is irresistibly reminded of some pathetic touches in Carlyle's immortal prose-picture of Coleridge in *John Sterling*. "The practical intellects of the world did not heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer." Even that gust of scholarly anger from Taylor's "Abode of Peace," suggests the image of Coleridge as eloquent to Carlyle of a life full of suffering, heavy-laden, "swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment"—eyes as full of sorrow as of inspiration, with confused pain looking mildly from them as in mild astonishment that the world should blindly misunderstand a beloved thought. *British Public Characters* for 1798, which records Taylor's life prior to that date, embellishes the cautious narrative with a small profile portrait. Amiability and tenderness are there allied to the massive power of research, the noble gift of idealism, the abstract retreat far backward to the tombs of mighty thinkers, and the instinctive gaze futureward, when unborn generations should in the crisis of Christianity return in intellectual penitence to worship what was spurned in the delirious victory of Hebraism. In Walter Pater's lectures on *Plato and Platonism*,[2] we listen to the impressions of a reviewer who casually knew the personalities he discusses as though Platonism were, say, a singular kind of Oxford movement, with John Henry Newman replacing Plato as the protagonist of the group. The attitude of a lecturing reviewer is a far cry from the profound reverence and passionate belief that Taylor vitalised his achievements with, in his life of neglected but enduring labor. I have not the impertinence to linger longer over *Iamblichus*, remembering that Emerson said Taylor's translations were as familiar in American as ignorantly ignored in English libraries. Never Christ or any other spoke truer words than "a prophet is without honor in his own country." America knows more of the homes and graves of Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, and Carlyle, than England—it has been said in bitter truth that any wealthy and cultured American would enthusiastically outbid the whole British Empire if these were on sale. Taylor is buried in Walworth churchyard—but like Moses no man can find his grave.

Of the *Politeia*—the *Commonwealth*, more familiarly known as the *Republic*, of Plato, his intellectual crown, no word is needed save to mention the cheap and elegant reprint. All discussion varies with individual views of life, education, philosophy, and art—uniquely so in approach to that mighty work that was written when the "glory that was Greece" was vanishing in depravity. Yet it may be permitted to illustrate one moral from the *Republic*. The contemporary social disorder every patriot laments is poisonous to art. In the soul of Plato the artist was strangled by the social regenerator. Luxurious ministrations to the sense of beauty were denounced by him as bitterly as in the mouthings of modern socialists. Hellenic politics were as lamentably complicated and self-seeking as in America and England to-day. To Sparta and to Egypt Plato directed his observations, and his intellect returned with a burden of regulations for his ideal State. Sexual morality in Sparta was as compliant as the yearning soul of Mr. Grant Allen could wish—masculine jealousy was sternly reprobated, and the husband was expected to encourage his wife to be communal in her favors. Wherefore, pronounces Plato, in the fifth book of the *Republic*, "these women must be common to all these men, and that no woman dwell with any man privately, and that their children likewise be common; that neither the parent know his own children, nor the children their parent."

So in this our day, socialists in revolt against the righteous individualism of liberty and property assail not only the worship of beauty in art, but also the sweetest sanctities of hearth and home. When the disorderly elements of democracy are fatally saturated with teachings that academic socialists borrow—without undue acknowledgment—from the more visionary ethics of Plato the result is obvious. Yet the philosophic dreamer hated democracy as fiercely as he might have hated recent applications of his theory. His Cloudcuckootown was possibly a parable of redeeming correction, scarcely an everlasting license for universal indulgence. Taylor earnestly argued that purity of conduct was the basis of the Pythagoric and Platonic philosophy.

Philosophy—purity—two great words of different import—these are memorial and remembered echoes of Taylor's life-task. He loved philosophy and labored to consecrate it as the divinest, holiest, and most valiantly catholic and beautiful influence in the life of man, and his adoration was chastened by the pure and childlike heart for which the poet prayed. His exquisite interpretation of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche in "The Golden Ass of Apuleius"—the union of the soul with "pure desire"—is sincerely ingenious, and, in contrast with another interpretation, self-revealing of the union in that frail and afflicted frame of marvellous brain and moral excellence.

1 *Representative Men*: Plato, pp. 22-23.
2 Macmillan & Co. 1893.

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